Lessons from Afghanistan

A Curriculum for Exploring Themes of Love and Forgiveness

A collaborative project of the Afghan Women’s Writing Project and the Fetzer Institute: Campaign for Love & Forgiveness.

Elisabeth Lehr & Suzanne Scarfone
“I am from Afghanistan, you are from the USA, and we are from all countries. We must be the messengers of love and forgiveness around the world.”

-- Friba
The Afghan Women's Writing Project (AWWP) was founded in 2009 by American author and journalist, Masha Hamilton. Participants in the project are women writers in Afghanistan who join together in secure, online workshops and are mentored by American professional writers and educators. The Afghan Women's Writing Project has joined with the Campaign for Love & Forgiveness, a project of the Fetzer Institute to develop a curriculum for personal exploration and reflection on the themes of love and forgiveness. This curriculum is designed to assist groups and individuals to explore their personal relationships to love and forgiveness by reflecting on the poignant writings of the Afghan Women's Writing Project participants.

Afghanistan is considered one of the most difficult countries to be a woman in the world today. As members of AWWP, Afghan women writers receive support and instruction in developing their writing voice, an empowerment often denied women in modern Afghanistan. Working with mentors, they also develop their English language writing skills, improvements that often yield dividends in their professional lives, empowering them within their households.

Collaboration between AWWP and the Fetzer Institute formed to give Afghan writers an opportunity to explore sources of strength and support in their lives through a structured workshop in which they could comfortably delve into the painful realities of life. The camaraderie of the workshop setting provided women with the support of their mentors and sister writers so they could contemplate the impact of love and forgiveness on their lives. Throughout the course of this work, we have come to believe there are great lessons to learn by reflecting upon the words and wisdom of the women writers in Afghanistan.

To begin the process, Afghan writers were invited to join a "Love and Forgiveness" workshop overseen by experienced AWWP mentors. During the six-month workshop, writers wrote on specific prompts designed by the mentors to address specific themes of love and forgiveness. The writers mined their hearts and souls thus presenting readers with gifts of beautiful words and deep wisdom from which all could learn. Writing from a nation that has been in conflict for over
30 years, these themes proved to be particularly powerful and inspirational to everyone involved. Our hope is that this curriculum will allow groups of various communities, backgrounds, and educational levels to explore, reflect, and learn about the meaning of love and forgiveness in their lives.

The curriculum is divided into five sections that progress from personal definitions of love and forgiveness to the themes of self-love, love of others, and finding forgiveness. The curriculum ends with an optional "capstone" activity designed to summarize the participants' learning and personal growth.

The Love and Forgiveness curriculum is designed to be flexible. Facilitators are free to select sections from the curriculum to create an experience that will most benefit their specific group structures. Depending on their respective workshop goals, facilitators may choose to organize sessions into more than or less than a 5 week project. Lessons from Afghanistan: A Curriculum for Exploring Themes of Love and Forgiveness provides a rich array of weekly material from which facilitators can choose what is best suited to their groups' goals for self and social reflection on love and forgiveness. Facilitators then have the opportunity to structure a program based on one or more objectives, meditations, and activities from each curriculum section, thus adapting the course of the program to their time constraints and desired outcomes.
“Our hearts be heavenly, holy and without end for love and forgiveness!”

-- Nasima

Objectives:
1. Participants will explore personal definitions of love and forgiveness.
2. Participants will assess place of love and forgiveness in their lives.

Meditation I:

Small Heart

I have hidden a world in my small heart,
full of love and feelings,
with hidden desires and wishes,
wishes that make me write.
A world so far from my world.

The world of love,
far from crying voices,
far from harsh ones.
There is no place for hate here.
In that world I want to forget
all pain and start a new life
of sunshine, warmth.
I want to paint my world
the color of happiness.

Every night, I see an angel in my dreams.
She takes my hand and leads me
to the garden of my wishes,
filled with colorful flowers.
There are no broken flowers here,
no dry leaves. Only
the voices of the birds, singing songs,
celebrating new life.
This angel makes all my dreams come true.

by Hila
Activities:

1. Complete the Love and Forgiveness Questionnaire. (See Appendix, page 24)

2. Invite participants to sit silently as you read the meditation poem. After a moment of silent reflection, ask the participants to share thoughts and images about love and forgiveness that came to them during the reading and reflective moment.

3. Ask participants to write at least five questions they may have about love. Then ask them to write at least five questions they have about forgiveness. Next, they should choose one of their questions from love and forgiveness to answer. Explain that they may not have ready answers to the questions, but they may use the time to explore their thinking. Invite them to share some questions with the group.

Example by Kamila

On Love
1. Why do humans need to love and be loved?
2. How can we express our love?
3. How can love make our lives meaningful?

   *I love all creatures and all of humanity, but my love of my mother is my strongest love. I love all mothers. Even if my mother is angry with me, I can see a special light in her eyes which tells me that she loves me. Most nights, I watch the stars for five minutes and think deeply about my mother and cry for her. My love for my mother and her love for me has made my life meaningful.*

4. Does real love exist?
5. How can I respond to other people's love?

On Forgiveness
1. Will forgiveness bring happiness in people's lives?
2. Why do we forgive those who repeat their mistakes over and over?
3. How can we forgive those who have ruined our lives?
4. Will forgiveness offer people comfort?
5. Can forgiveness make the armed Taliban stop killing innocent people?

*Afghanistan's government decided to forgive those Taliban who want to stop killing the innocent people. I believe if a person killed one or two persons, they change into an evil one who cannot forgive her/himself. If some of the Taliban want to join the peace process, they have their own aims; they will achieve their goals by entering into the society.*
Meditation II:

Love Is Not…

When we love someone:
It is not something to buy.
It is not a doll to play with.
It is not a football to shoot.
It is not a ball to throw to another.
It is not a flower to smell and then drop away.
It is not a glass to break.
It is not a thing to use once then throw away.
It is not a book to write in and, when it is full, to lose.
This is not true love.

by Yalda

Activities:

1. One way to understand what love means to you is to express what is not love to you. Ask participants to take a few minutes to collect ideas about what is not love. Ask them to share their list with a partner.

2. Invite participants to write an individual or a group poem about what is not love. In your poem, use the repetitive and powerful form of the List poem. Imitate the form of Yalda's poem "Love Is Not…” as a guide. Instruct participants to begin each line with the words “love is not” or “it is not.”
"When I see my eyes in the mirror, I fall in love with kindness."
-- N

Objectives:
1. Examine how you feel about the concept of self-love.
2. Explore ways to feel love for yourself.
3. Consider who is the “real” self.

Meditation I:

Last Night

I was a guest in the house of my heart
The house smelled familiar
It was full of colors, the colors in me
The walls full of mirrors
Full of pictures of me
I talked with her about a woman
She and I knew
The kind daughter of a father
Pride for him to be in his house
Hands for a mother in her life
Eyes for a brother to see
Heart full of love for a husband
Heart full of love for a son
My heart looked at me and asked
When will you love me?
When will you love me?

by Nasima

Activities:

1. True love of self starts with taking inventory, or listing what actually makes up the self. Read the meditation above and ask participants to sit quietly in a comfortable space and write a stream of consciousness list of all the descriptive words that come to mind when they think of themselves.

2. Divide participants into small groups and ask them to discuss these ideas:
• What is self-love? Could part of self-love be an acceptance of your feelings towards yourself and, thus, the freedom of behaving like your true self, not the self other people define for you?
• Next, ask participants to make two lists. In the first list, write the names of significant individuals in your life and describe how they view you. In the second list, write the names again and either agree or disagree with their assessments of you.

3. Invite participants to write about the question below. Ask them to share their reflections with a partner:
   • Do you feel any discomfort with the idea of self-love? Why or why not?

4. Ask participants to draw a picture of themselves as a child and write a love letter to her/him.

5. Ask participants to write a poem in answer to Nasima’s heart’s question: “When will you love me?”
   • Now that you have come closer to a better understanding yourself, write a poem in which you show the reader how your true self looks through the eyes of someone who truly loves you for who you are. The first line of the poem will be: "I love you now because..." Each line of the poem should begin with the same words.
   • Share these final poems with the group.

**Meditation II:**

**Eyes of the Heart**

I pick up the broken pieces,
the pain, wound, insults,
lies, betrayal, scars,
your words.
I eat my tears, silent,
don’t have an answer,
so I call my heart,
ask if I am such a bad person?
Do I deserve the thrust of your mistrust?
I ask my heart,
Do you know me?
Is it you who understands me in this world?
Do you know the woman who breathes in me?
My heart’s eyes fill, tears,
and I hear the voice of her breath.
She looks into my eyes and says,
“Forgive yourself. You are the daughter of love,
The voice of love and passion.
You are the arms of tolerance.
You walk over the ignorance bridge,
talk on behalf of absent voices.
I know you,
understand you well in this world.
Remember that never will anybody else.”
I understand the woman who breathes in me.
“You deserve love,” she says.
“I know that you are dear.”

by N

Activities:

1. Invite the participants to sit silently as you read the meditation poem. Ask them to write down lines, phrases, and words that resonate with them from the poem. Invite them to spontaneously call out words on their lists.

2. Invite participants to spend some quiet moments to do the following: Listen to the voice of your heart's breath. With eyes closed, imagine the questions you would long to ask your heart. You can express your deepest doubts and misgivings about yourself to your heart.

After this meditation, write down a list of the questions that most haunt you about your self-worth. Next, talk about these questions with a partner. Finally, write a poem in which your heart's voice affirms your beauty and worth as a person.

3. Ask participants to complete the following activity: List the reasons your heart gives you to love yourself. Understand the person who breathes in you.

4. Suggest that participants create a list of things they can do to show love for themselves by asking: What are the ways we can show ourselves respect and kindness? Ask them to commit to completing one of the activities on the list and report back next time you meet on the success of the activity.
"I can smile to grow the root of the friendship tree"
-- Nasima

Objective:
1. Identify how we give love, and receive love, from others.
2. Discover the power of love in our lives.

Meditation I:

A Universe of Love

Moments bloom when
You look at me
Your lovely teeth look
Like pearls in the ocean
When you smile
A snowfall of love
Falls down in my heart
When you suck my hair
And your little fingers
Walk on my face
I feel love born in me
My son, my parrot
I love you
I love you
Because when I think of you
I become a universe
Full of love
Full of love

by N
Activities:

1. Read the poem "Universe of Love" and ask participants to free write what they think N means when she expresses that the love of her son turns her into a universe full of love. How can love of someone else transform a person into something as infinite as a universe?

When participants are finished writing, invite them to share their pieces with members of a small group.

2. Ask participants to contemplate their love for someone who makes them feel complete and ecstatic. Invite them to write a short poem that specifically describes the nature of that love.

Meditation II:

My Tokens of Love

The tokens of love can be anything. Let's think of ourselves in a fruit farmhouse. I am giving each of you a fruit, which can keep you healthy for a long time. I hope you can imagine it for the whole week and accept my fruit.

Sabera, I give you a strawberry.
Yalda, I give you a watermelon.
Maryam, I give you a mango.
Nasima, I give you melon.
Friba, I give you a pineapple.
Hila, I give you cherries.
Kamila, I give you an orange.
Seeta, I give you red grapes.
N, I give you green grapes.
Sitara, I give you an apple.
Aisha, I give you a banana.
Fowzia, I give you a black berry.
Massoma, I give you a granadilla.

True friendship is a form of love. When we embrace the whole person of a friend, we are allowing that person to be her true self in relation to us. We may feel safe, secure, joyful, and cared for by our friend. Our friend's acceptance of us nurtures the self-love that is necessary to give our love to another.

by Maryam
Activities:

1. Give out “Tokens of Love”. Give members of the group one lovely thing to carry with them throughout the week.

Title your poem "My Tokens of Love."

Format:

(person’s name), I give you a …

2. Ask participants to think of a time when they were truly loved, or gave love to, a close friend. Ask them to write about a specific incident in sensory detail responding to the following: Where were you? What took place? How did you feel about the event? How did your friend feel about the event? Did the love and happiness of friendship stay with you for a time? Share with a partner.

Meditation III:

Spoil a Child with Love

When a new baby is born, people are happy and try to give the baby lots of love by holding the baby in their arms and kissing the baby and sharing and bringing gifts. But eventually people stop, because they say that if you hold a baby for too long the baby will become spoiled and will not stop crying unless someone holds him. By the time the baby grows up, he or she won’t remember if people ever loved them or held them or gave them gifts.

Aren’t adults the same? If you love them too much, they will take you for granted and believe that such love will always be there.

My question is: how do we become spoiled? Does it come from having too much love in our lives or from something else?

It all starts when humans are born and given love. They will die taking the love with them, leaving the living with only memories.

I am grateful for the love I have in my life. But it scares me because people who love me will not stay with me forever, and I may not know how to continue my life without them. I don’t know if I could ever find another love to take their place in my heart. The memories of that time will come back and this will make life hard.

I think that being spoiled does not have to do with love. It is about the way people live their lives. One can get spoiled from having too much. I live in a huge house with servants. A driver takes me where I need to go, but I try to do most things myself,
including cooking, cleaning, washing, and ironing. I may have this wonderful life today, but not tomorrow. I appreciate the love my parents give me, but I do not want to be spoiled by their love and care. I will learn to stand on my own and rely on myself.

I believe in love, and I treasure love. But love can make someone weak as much as it can make one strong.

by Aisha

Activities:

1. Ask the participants to read the meditation essay and to jot down words, phrases, and thoughts that come to mind. Invite them to share and discuss their notes with the group.

2. Ideas expressed by Aisha are not uncommon outside of Afghanistan. Invite participants to complete a fast write (5 minutes stream-of-consciousness) on this question:

   Is it possible to "spoil" someone with love?

3. Divide participants into pairs. Ask them to reflect on ideas associated with communicating love to others. Have you not been able, for whatever reasons, to express your love to someone that you love? This may be due to personal discomfort or familial culture, or perhaps it is a case of unrequited love. What would you like to say to this person? What do you need to hear this person say back to you?

   Talk about this with your partner and then role-play what you would like to hear your loved one say to you. Take turns telling each other what you would like to hear said to you by loved ones. When you are the listening partner, reflect the love and support back to the speaking partner.

   When both partners have completed the activity, spend a few minutes discussing the experience and write reflections.
“And now life is my favorite dinner: taste is love and spice is forgiveness.”

-- N

Objectives:
1. Explore ways forgiveness can bring us comfort.
2. Discover ways to bring forgiveness into our personal lives, our family lives, and into our community lives.

Meditation I:

I Apologize

I apologize not because I am a weak person,
I apologize not because I am shy,
I apologize not because I am powerless,
I apologize not because I am immature,
I apologize not because I am poor,
I apologize not because it makes me less.
I apologize because I am strong,
I apologize because I believe in humanity,
I apologize because I have self-confidence,
I apologize because I am sick of sin,
I apologize because my life is full of dreams,
I apologize because I want to see everyone happy,
I apologize because apology is the way of ending hostility,
I apologize because my heart is full of love,
I apologize because I want to make the world a peaceful place,
a place full of love and forgiveness.

by Sitara
Activity:

 Invite participants to read Sitara’s poem aloud, each individual reading a line and moving on to the next participant. Ask them to consider whether or not asking for forgiveness can be signs of the strength and power of love we hold in our hearts. Next, ask them to write their own apology poems.

Finally, ask participants to share a favorite line from their poems and create a group apology poem.

Meditation II:

Hurry

We have such a short time to do this good work, to forgive each other’s small mistakes, to pay attention to positive points. We must practice being good people, and destroy the lens of pessimism in our eyes, and see the facts of life.

Why are we born to this world, and what are our plans for this life? Are they the destruction or betterment of our world? I try to smile. I don't have money, power or authority, but I have God who gave me a mouth with lips for smiling. I have language for speaking. I can use them for good, to carry messages of peace and love and forgiveness. I can smile to grow the root of the friendship tree.

We have such short time to do good work. Let's hurry.

by Nasima

Activities:

1. Read the poem “Hurry,” and ask the participants to consider this question: Do you think that the path to forgiveness is "seeing the facts of life," accepting them, and then moving on to live life in a fully present way? What do you think Nasima means when she writes:

"We must practice being good people, and destroy the lens of pessimism in our eyes, and see the facts of life."
Next, ask the participants to write a list of personal facts of life and then free write about how they use this self-knowledge to make more compassionate decisions and to open their hearts to forgiveness? Invite them to share their plans in small groups.

2. Discuss Nasima’s idea with the group, namely that forgiveness carries a sense of urgency. Divide participants into small groups and ask them to think of ways they can enact forgiveness of “small mistakes” in family life and within the larger community.

3. Ask participants to think of one hurtful incident that has occurred in their lives, and think of two small ways they might go about moving toward forgiving the one who hurt them. Ask them to write down the two ways and consider actual steps needed to implement them. Discuss these ideas with a partner.
Session Five: Love and Forgiveness That Transcends Boundaries

“I need only to clean the dust from my heart and open its window for the fresh air. Because I believe that love is in the air, everywhere, and you and I need to just breathe it deeply, my dear.”

-- N

Objectives:

1. Explore the meaning and power of love and forgiveness within broader communities.
2. Examine how forgiveness and love bring us peace in conflict.

Meditation I:

Huge Spaces to Fill with Love

Humans are creatures who need to be loved and forgiven and most of the time. No amount of wealth can take the place of those two things.

Religions emphasize love and forgiveness, but humans themselves need to have these two capabilities inside them. Without love and forgiveness, human lives are meaningless.

Love and forgiveness are mirrors in a land of humanity. They can remove pessimism and hatred from society and replace them with patience and kindness.

World wars and civil wars ruin people’s lives and spread disease and mental illness among the people around the world. Humans grow mentally and physically tired. Look at Adolf Hitler—there was no love among humans in his Holocaust; ignorance ruled. Eventually the 20th-century world wars ended and countries reconciled, but still there are many people who never knew humanity themselves.

I think that most of the time it is the religions that make such huge spaces between humans. This is very odd because religions were supposed to make us aware of humanity’s worth and support humans.

Today, for example, the ethnic Hazara people from Afghanistan are being killed in Pakistan. Why? Because they are Shiite Muslims. In Pakistan, the radical Sunnis are starting a genocide against Hazara people. I wonder why people kill each other because of religions that they did not even come up with themselves but that are legacies they inherited from their grandfathers?

We fight and humiliate each other because of religions whose purpose was supposedly to remove the gaps and hatred among people and give meaning to lives.
wonder how we can learn to understand the meaning and worth of humanity?

I wish that some day we will be able to respect each other only as humans, that we can forgive whatever was done in the past and live with love. I am sure that thinking positively with respect and forgiveness would help us in our lives to have a positive view about other humans.

by Kamila

Activities:

1. Ask participants to read the essay and discuss what contributes to social conflict within their community. Create a list of factors that contribute to social conflict. Invite participants to break into small groups and either ask them to select or assign them factors to problem solve. Ask participants to generate a list of possible solutions that address the problem. Share the lists with the large group.

2. Divide participants into groups and give each group poster board and markers. Invite each group to create their "ideal" community on the board. What would it have? Participants use words and images as they like. Ask groups to display their communities and brainstorm about what could be done in their own communities to bring about missing elements.

Meditation II:

Bittersweetness

The triad holds us--
Life, love, forgiveness,
This everything of life's river.
We begin at home,
with family, with forgiveness there.
For without it,
there is no friendship there.
Forgiveness nurtures the home,
need never be disputed.
I am a Muslim woman.
I do not incite problems.
I love. I forgive.
It begins in my home — friendship
within my family, with my community,
with the world.
I wish patience for myself,  
for my community,  
for this world.  
We cannot live  
without love.

by the Kabul Writers’ Group

Activity:

1. Read the group poem "Bittersweetness." Ask participants to write their own group poem that begins with the first two lines: "The triad holds us--/Life, love, forgiveness". The poem will end with the two lines: "We cannot live/without love."

Meditation III:

If Love Took Over My Country

What would happen…
If love took over my country?  
Would we become a happy and united people  
Where the world hears only happy news about us  
All the time, on all the channels?  
Would there be no tension, no worries, no anger?  
No corruption  
No fraud  
No violence  
No sound of gunfire  
No rockets, no war, no suicide attacks  
No killing?  
Would there be peace and happiness?  
Love and support and enjoyment and respect,  
Trust and forgiveness, kindness and sympathy,  
Humanity and freedom?  
Would people smile while walking on the street?  
And sleep at home in peace and quiet  
While enjoying life  
without fear?

by Yalda
Activities:

1. Ask participants to read the above poem and write a stream-of-consciousness piece that focuses on this question: What would happen if love took over my country? Ask them to write single words and groups of words, not an essay. Then have them circle the words that carry the most importance to them. Share with a partner.

2. The self-affirming and altruistic goal of unconditional love has the power to unite all people in their humanity.

In small groups, ask participants to discuss what unconditional love means to them. Provide specific examples. Have one person be the note taker. When groups are done, have each spokesperson read group notes. Have a discussion of the larger group’s ideas.
Session Six: Incorporating Love and Forgiveness into Our Lives

“We must be the messengers of love and forgiveness around the world.”
-- Friba

Meditation I:

Learn from the Gardener by Kamila

Oh humans,

Let’s learn from the gardener
Who has a deep relationship with beauty
A heart full of love
Speaks with grasses
Knows the flowers’ language

Let’s learn from the gardener
Whose dreams are green
Who is never angry with the rose thorns
That prick her hands

Let’s learn from the butterflies
Their method of love
Flying tirelessly
Ending life around a candle

Activities:

1. Ask participants to write to the following questions in any form of their choice.
   - How can we use the power of love to change our world?
   - How can we use the power of forgiveness to change our world?

2. Ask participants to respond to the follow questions either in writing or in discussion:
   - What was it like to explore the topics of love and forgiveness?
   - What kinds of observations did you make about the world around you?
   - Explain anything new that you learned about yourself. Were you surprised by what you learned?
   - What lessons have you learned about your relationships with others?
   - What is the most significant discovery that you take away from participation in this project?
Appendix: Love and Forgiveness Questionnaire

On a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being very much important, 1 being not important at all, please tell us how you feel about these statements. Type the number that best applies to you:

1. How important is love in your life?

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Very Important   Not At All Important

2. How important is love in your family life?

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Very Important   Not At All Important

3. How important is love in your society, overall?

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Very Important   Not At All Important

4. How important is forgiveness in your life?

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Very Important   Not At All Important

5. How important is forgiveness in your family life?

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Very Important   Not At All Important

6. How important is forgiveness in society, overall?

   10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
   Very Important   Not At All Important
For the next questions, please write your answers below. Your answers can be short or long, however you wish.

1. What is your definition of love?

2. What are the different kinds of love? Which kind is most noticeable in your life?

3. If the word “love” is a verb as well as a noun, how should people show their love?

4. Do you feel love in your life? Do you wish for more love in your life?

5. Do you withhold love in your life? From yourself? From others?

6. For you personally, what does it mean to forgive?

7. Do you feel forgiveness in your life? Have others forgiven you when you have done wrong?

8. In general, are you a forgiving person? Why or why not?

9. Is there ever a time when it is wrong to forgive?

Suggested Resources


Afghan Women’s Writing Project. www.AWWProject.org.


ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND PARTICIPANT ORGANIZATIONS

Elisabeth Lehr is writer and adjunct history instructor living in Vermont. She holds a MA degree in American Women's History from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. Elisabeth came to the Afghan Women's Writing Project as its first Workshop Director and Associate Director prior to taking on the role of Acting Executive Director in 2012. She has been an activist for women's rights at home and abroad for over 30 years, first committing to the fight for Afghan women's rights when the Taliban took over Afghanistan's government in 1996. Today Elisabeth is a mentor for students at SOLA—School of Leadership Afghanistan.

Suzanne Scarfone, English Romantic Poetry and Virginia Woolf scholar, is a creative writing professor and curriculum advisor with the Afghan Women's Writing Project; a writer-in-residence with InsideOut Literary Arts Project in Detroit; a hospital healing arts poetry consultant; and a university lecturer. She was educated at Michigan State University, and Wayne State University where she earned her Ph.D. in English Literature with cognates in Art History, French Literature, and Old English. Empathy for the vulnerable child, the aged sick, the weary wanderer, the soul on the brink of change underlies all of her poetry. Influenced by English Romanticism and French Surrealism, her poems paint the visionary moments found in the smallest details of a simple, everyday life.

The Afghan Women's Writing Project was founded in 2009 in defense of the human right to voice one’s story. The Afghan constitution protects freedom of expression for all citizens, yet her women are frequently unable to exercise this basic privilege due to severe gender inequality. AWWP believes that telling one's story is an act of empowerment that creates possibilities for economic independence and instills leadership abilities as it reinforces the principle of freedom of speech. The aim of the organization is to nurture, educate, and carry the voices of Afghanistan's women to the world, while offering readers unique insights into Afghan culture.

The Fetzer Institute is a private operating foundation based in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Established by broadcast pioneer John E. Fetzer (1901-1991) the Institute uses its philanthropic resources to create programs that foster awareness of the power that love, forgiveness, and compassion can have in our world. People across the globe, from all cultures and traditions, practice love and forgiveness—values central to the fabric of humanity—in daily life. Yet, there are few institutions working to investigate, activate, and celebrate the power of love and forgiveness as a practical force for good in today's world. This is the work of the Fetzer Institute. We are interested in fostering awareness of the diverse ways people truly experience and understand love and forgiveness and how they embody those thoughts, emotions and spiritualities with their actions in daily life.

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27